

Kate Norton
Interview Data
Edu 402

Silent Generation (Born 1941):

"I started kindergarten in Wellesley in 1946 and graduated from Wellesley High School in 1959.

In elementary school, our class was probably 25-30 students. The desks were lined up 6 across and 5 deep. The left handed students, of which I was one, sat with our backs to the windows so the light would come over our left shoulder. This was difficult because the main black board (not white board) was to our left. Consequently, when I write I hold my pen like a right handed person, not upside down like many lefties.

In elementary school we had the usual. Reading, spelling, English, penmanship, science, social studies, math and physical education. We also went home for lunch-we had a hour. Since it was a neighborhood school, we all could walk or ride our bike to school.

In Jr. High and High School the boys had industrial arts, while we girls had home economics.

The thing I liked best about school was being with my friends. In all my years of school, I never wanted to be absent and I seldom was. I never was fond of spelling bees, and math was not a favorite subject.

I taught one year of grade 1 in West Gardiner, ME. ,then 3 more years in Gardiner to second graders. After Karen, John and Wendy were in school, I taught nursery school in my home for 4 years. In 1973 I taught second, third and fourth grade in Augusta. In 1985, I left the elementary school and taught 14 years at the Jr. High, later to be called Middle School.

I am sure there were a lot of differences between being a student in the 40's and 50's and being a teacher but one thing that stand out is the dress code. No pants in school when I was a student, but by the time I became a teacher in Augusta 1975, most people never wore dresses., and teachers even resorted to wearing jeans. That was partly due to the need to save energy on heating. In fact the minister of the Congregational church in Augusta encouraged the ladies to wear slacks to church. (almost a sin in those days) Although there was busing for Jr. High and High School students in Wellesley, I was able to walk to all my schools. For many reasons busing is a necessity, but walking is not bad! ie obesity!

Lastly, it would be nice to see a change in attitude toward the teachers from both parents and students. Teachers are there to help students succeed in learning and need the support of parents as well as the students. I'd like to see teachers be more open with students so that students realize their teachers are people and are there to help each child.

One thing you didn't ask, but I think is important: What is the biggest difference between children of the 40's and children of the 21st century? My answer is that all children are alike no matter what generation

they come from. All students, indeed, all people, like to be noticed, valued and appreciated for whatever skills they may have. When students know the teacher likes them, the student will work all the harder for that teacher. It is especially important to follow this advice with difficult students. Find something to praise them on (not necessarily academics) and gain a rapport. A sense of humor is also a great gift. The classroom doesn't have to be serious all the time. Laugh!!”

Baby Boomer (Born 1960)

- Catholic school as an elementary education, later went onto public middle and high school.

(Augusta, Maine)

- Large classes, not much individuality. Classes were mainly in rows and desks and focus was more on the work and less on the students.
- Remembered that there was no “in between” kind of place for students with disabilities, either you were a “normal” student or a “special” student in the special ed room, completely separated from peers.
- There were no sports teams for girls, except for field hockey, which began in middle school and cheerleading, which was in high school.
- A lot of classmates didn’t attend college, was encouraged to by parents and had good enough grades to attend, but a lot of kids at the time didn’t and it was just as normal to not attend college.
- Went to a big enough school where there were options such as foreign language.
- Catholic school had a uniform, whereas public school didn’t. Catholic school was overall much stricter than the public schools attended.
- Grew up in a family without too much money, but was fully expected to attend college so school was very important in order to get scholarships.
- Growing up in a bigger city, there were many schools in the area to choose from when picking where to attend.